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IS LIBERIA WORTH SAVING?

*By Emmett J. Scott, Late Commissioner of the United States
of America to the Republic of Liberia*

The scout cruiser "Chester," U. S. Navy, conveying the Commission of the United States of America to the Republic of Liberia, anchored in the open roadstead fronting Monrovia, the capital of the republic, early Saturday morning, May 8, 1909.

In a few moments, the long beach-line and the high promontory on which is Fort Morris were teeming with eager hundreds anxious for a view of the trim man-of-war. Promptly at eight o'clock the "Chester" boomed the national salute and was answered in turn from the fort. Shortly afterward the American Minister, Dr. Ernest Lyon, waiving the formality of a first call upon him by the Commander of the American naval vessel, put off from shore to greet the Commission and to apprise it of elaborate preparations for an informal reception in its honor which had been made by the citizens of Monrovia for that afternoon.

About two o'clock, those on board the "Chester" sighted a gaudily decorated gasoline launch putting off from shore. It bore the international signal, "Welcome," and also, intertwined, the national colors of the United States and Liberia. The Commission was received on the launch by President Barclay's personal aide-de-camp and two members of his cabinet, and was conveyed ashore to the accompaniment of hoarse-throated shouts from the people gathered along the shore.

In front of the Custom House there were assembled the Mayor of Monrovia, the City Council, a brass band, three companies of militia, and a host of men and women representing every class resident in the national capital; Liberians,

the Europeans who reside there, members of the native tribes to be found about Monrovia, the Krus, the Vais, the Mandingoes, and the Goras, arrayed in barbaric finery, as well as in the informality of dress, or rather undress, which obtains among the greater number of them. It was a queer aggregation of humanity upon which we looked. The cornets blared a welcome, the Mayor spoke, the Chairman of the Commission responded, and then began a march up the steep hill and through the streets to the home of the American Minister. At the top of the hill, we were stopped by a party of young women representing the County of Montserrado, with an arch held aloft and listened to another address of welcome. Successively we were stopped till we had received in the same way expressions of welcome from each of the other counties of the Republic, Bassa, Sinoe and Maryland. When we finally reached the American Legation the four decorated arches were still being held over us and festivity and joy reigned among the people. On our way to the Legation, men and women ran at our side, eagerly peering into our faces, and expressing their pleasure in all the fervor of emotional peoples.

In each and every address of welcome, as well as many others, to which we listened before putting the shores of Liberia behind us, there was the note of dependence upon America, of kinship and affection for America and Americans, and a willingness on the part of the unofficial classes at least to entrust to the American Government the settlement of all of their difficulties; in fact, it was all too apparent in some quarters that an American protectorate would be heartily welcomed as a way out of the troubles which beset them on every side. It became necessary, I need not say, to correct in as pointed a way as tact would permit the misapprehension under which many of the people—not the official classes I am glad to say—seemed to labor.

Many of them seemed to regard the Commission as being invested with extraordinary powers, as being in position to settle forthwith for them all of the difficulties which had given, and were giving, them so much concern. Members of the Commission in public and in private were called upon

again and again to advise the Liberians not to expect too much of the American Government.

The Commission was compelled to assure them that it was there as a Commission of Inquiry only, delegated to ascertain what measures of relief were necessary to enable them to preserve their government as an independent one. We did not hesitate to point out to the Liberians that at best the Government of the United States could only help them to help themselves, and that we could not and would not recommend that anything be done for them that they could do for themselves.

I have thus detailed at length the cordial reception given the Commission by the Liberians, and have given you some idea as to their eager expectations, that you may judge as to the prevalent feeling among the masses of the people. A review of the history of the founding of Liberia and of the many State papers of one kind and another, which during the past ninety years have been written concerning the Republic, would seem to give adequate basis for the expectations entertained by the Liberians.

Curious as it may appear, Maryland and Virginia—slave holding states—were mainly responsible for the founding of this Negro colony. As Mr. Roland Post Falkner Chairman of the Commission, pointed out in an article contributed to the *American Journal of International Law*, July, 1910, there began to come to view from time to time in a number of slave-holding states a considerable body of public opinion that did not too complacently accept the institution of human slavery as one that deserved other than condemnation and censure. That it was a minority opinion did not influence it to silence; eventually it began to find expression in plans for lessening the horrors of the institution, if not for its complete extinction.

In a résumé of the incidents connected with the immediate founding of the colony, Mr. Falkner says that

This was especially true in Maryland and Virginia, where it found expression in the not infrequent emancipation of slaves, especially by testamentary disposition. By this means, there arose a not inconsiderable body of free Negroes who were plainly out of place

in commonwealths, whose laws, social traditions, and economic order, were based upon the antithesis of freeman and slave, which in this case meant white and black. The free Negro was looked upon by many as the peaceful Indians were regarded, as in the body politic yet not a part of it. It was partly the desire to better the condition of the free Negro, partly no doubt the fear that his presence might be a harmful influence among the blacks held in bondage, which first suggested the idea that he be sent back to Africa where he belonged.

The idea of a sort of expiatory repatriation of the African had been preached in the United States before the Revolution. In England the efforts of Wilberforce had been instrumental in planting a colony of emancipated British slaves in Sierra Leone. The State of Virginia had occupied itself with the question, and had sought the aid of the general government to secure some appropriate place for the settlement of free Negroes. These tendencies came to a focus in the American Colonization Society founded in 1816 in Washington through the efforts of Rev. Robert Finley. It counted its supporters among the leading men of the nation. Henry Clay presided over its initial meeting held in the hall of the House of Representatives, and Justice Bushrod Washington was long its president.

Preliminary arrangements for the proposed colony were made in 1818 when representatives of the society visited the coast of Africa, and negotiated for the cession of Sherbro Island in the present colony of Sierra Leone. Two years later a body of emigrants was sent thither under the convoy of the United States sloop of war Cyane. The hostility of the natives caused the abandonment of the project and the retirement of the would-be colonists to Sierra Leone. A second expedition in 1821 found a more suitable site at Cape Mesurado, but were unable to come to terms with the natives, until the arrival of Lieutenant Stockton of the U. S. Schooner Alligator, who, with Doctor Eli Ayres, agent of the Society, forced the natives to enter into a deed of cession. Part of the purchase price was paid from the ship's stores.

Other settlements along the coast were later established, and finally having triumphed over the natives who had harassed them, also in some measure over disease which had all but disheartened them and decimated their numbers, and likewise over internal bickering and strife, a union of all of the settlements, with the exception of Maryland, was brought about in 1837, with a definite form of government, although the Republic itself, as such, did not come into life until 1847.

It was due, we have seen, to the energetic action of an officer of the U. S. Navy that the colony owes its existence.

The fatherly interest which the United States has shown in Liberia is due to the fact that from the start this nation was a partner in the enterprise. It has continuously, through seasons of stress and storm, in one way or another, played a prominent part in further colonizing, in succoring and in helping to more firmly establish the colony on a stable, orderly and independent basis. Mr. Secretary Knox of the State Department, in a review of the relations of the United States and Liberia, says:

The story of Liberia from its earliest inception to its elevation to independent statehood demonstrates its American character throughout. Its first foothold on the African coast was through the efforts of American citizens. From 1819, the association of the Government of the United States with the project is distinct. The colony was a necessary factor in the execution of a federal statute. The vessels of the United States participated in the initial acts of colonization. Negotiations with the inland tribes for the purchase of lands were conducted by officers of the United States. Prior to the civil war the United States maintained a squadron on the west coast of Africa to suppress the slave trade, and the officers of this squadron lent their aid and assistance to the Liberians in their troubles with the natives. In 1886 Congress authorized the Secretary of the Navy to transfer a gunboat to Liberia.

Thus the resources of the United States Government have been employed to colonize the liberated Africans, to build homes for them, to furnish them with farming utensils, to pay instructors for them, to purchase or charter ships for their convenience, to detail naval vessels for the transport of its agents and as convoys to the colonists, to build forts for the protection of the settlers, to supply them with arms and munitions of war, to enlist troops to guard them, and to employ the army and navy in their defense. The lands which the several state colonies established were purchased with American money by the several state societies. The initial organization of the Commonwealth was perfected and controlled by the parent societies in the United States, and the eventual creation of the Republic of Liberia was due to the generous counsel and action of the American societies in advising the organizations to become an independent state and in relinquishing to the new state the directory powers they had heretofore exercised.

Not Mr. Knox alone has summarized and forcibly expressed the peculiar facts of Liberia's founding and of her claims upon our sympathy, and when necessary, of our guidance and help. There is to be found strewn through many pages of official records in the State Department other,

and, in some instances, more pointed phrase, benevolent expressions of our interest in and concern for the continued existence of Liberia as an independent colony, and as a national entity among the nations of the world. As for example, Mr. Secretary Fish, in 1869, in writing to the American Minister to Liberia with regard to certain boundary disputes between Great Britain and Liberia, said:

You will inform the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in reply to his request, that the President regards the progress of the Republic of Liberia, which has been so much identified with the United States, with deep solicitude, and would see with deep regret any collision between it and any foreign power. And if the good offices of the United States can do anything towards the just settlement of the existing controversy, you are at liberty to tender them.

In 1879, Mr. Acting Secretary Hunter, writing with regard to intimations of French encroachment, said:

When it is considered that this government founded and fostered the nucleus of native representative government on the African shores, and that Liberia, so created, affords a field of emigration and enterprise for the lately emancipated Africans of this country, who have not been slow to avail themselves of the opportunity, it is evident that this government must feel a peculiar interest in any apparent movement to divert the independent political life of Liberia for the aggrandizement of a great continental power which already has a foothold of actual trading possessions on the neighboring coast.

Continuing, Mr. Hunter said in addressing the American Minister at Paris:

You are doubtless aware that the policy of the adjacent British settlement of Sierra Leone, has of late years been one of encroachment, if not of positive unfriendliness, toward Liberia, and it may prove that the policy of France in this matter may be merely antagonistic to British encroachment, and designed rather to aid that feeble republic to maintain its independent status, with developement of trade with France and French possessions, than to merge Liberia in the outlying system of that country. If so, it is desirable at least that the United States should be cognizant of the true tendency of the movement.

In successive state papers, Mr. Secretary Evarts stated that:

Liberia is regarded by us with peculiar interest. . . . It is quite suitable that the Great Powers should know that the United States publicly recognizes these relations and is prepared to take every proper step to maintain them.

Mr. Secretary Frelinghuysen regarded Liberia as "entitled to the sympathy, and, when practicable, to the protection and encouragement of the United States," and Mr. Secretary Bayard, Mr. Secretary Blaine, and in later years Ministers Secretary Root and Knox have avowed similar interest and concern.

Mr. Root, in recommending in 1909 that a Commission of three persons be sent to Liberia "to investigate the interests of the United States and its citizens in the Republic of Liberia," wrote to the President of the United States:

It is unnecessary to argue that the duty of the United States toward the unfortunate victims of the slave trade was not completely performed by landing them upon the coast of Africa, and that our nation rests under the highest obligation to assist them, so far as they need assistance, toward the maintenance of free, orderly and prosperous civil society.

Evidently, the Liberians have also been of the same opinion as Mr. Root, for they have not failed to seek to avail themselves of the friendly assistance of the Government of the United States, at all times and under all circumstances. As a matter of fact, as an associate member of the American Commission to Liberia had occasion to state in addressing the citizens of Monrovia at a public reception tendered the Commission, the Negro people of the United States never fail to remind the white people of the United States that they owe them help, guidance, and assistance because they *brought* them from Africa to the United States, while in Liberia the Commission was constantly reminded of the fact that the people of the United States owe them succor in their present difficulties, because the people of the United States *sent* them to Africa. They have consistently and persistently sought to have the United States transmute into action some of the benovolent expressions of friendly concern to which I have referred.

Liberia, as at present constituted, contains some 40,000 square miles of territory, has 350 miles of sea coast, and a population variously estimated. It is safe to assume, however, I think, that the population is made up of some 50,000 civilized Negroes and probably about 2,000,000 natives or aborigines. This minority population of 50,000 civilized Negroes is, of course, the embodiment of the state, and it is of them one must think in contemplating the future of Liberia. They are all there is of organized authority, and it is they who hold in check, or in some semblance of order, the teeming thousands who constitute the native population; it is through them that the natives are to receive some idea of what civilization means.

Sir Harry Johnston, who has written much of Liberia, and to whom Liberia is most indebted for studies of its flora and fauna, of its resources and possibilities, estimates that of these 50,000 civilized Negroes only some 12,000 to 15,000 came from America, or are descendants of those who did. Obviously then, if his estimates are to be accepted, the other 38,000 to whom civilization has extended are indebted for it to these Americo-Liberians.

In a country where the elective franchise is restricted by property qualifications, some seven thousand persons voted at the last presidential election. It would appear then, barring women and children, disfranchised adults and their children, 50,000 as an estimate of the civilized population is not too large. The important thing, in fact the most important thing, it seems to me, to bear in mind in considering Liberia, its faults and virtues, is that the body politic, the embodied state, is composed of this small group of 50,000 persons, men, women and children; and that few groups as small as this are asked to provide men sufficiently prepared to conduct a government without fault and without reproach. We do not, at least, entertain such expectations in this country.

In considering Liberia one is tempted to contrast it with the great powers which have embarked on schemes of colonization in Africa. But this would not be fair, for Liberia must be judged by standards wholly different from those

which have commanded limitless resources of money and brain.

In the conduct of their government the Liberians are primitive and crude, when contrasted with the Great Powers, and there are to be found many defects of administration, and yet, I am bound to conclude, they have accomplished much in the face of most depressing handicaps. They have deliberately chosen isolation as a guaranty of continued existence. No white man may own land in the country, and therefore no white man may become a citizen; they have not had that contact with a stronger people which their brothers in America have had and which serves so constantly as an incentive for their strivings; and yet, one cannot forbear confessing that when the early struggles of Liberia are considered, when its past and present embarrassments are considered, it has done well and is deserving quite as much of praise as of blame.

The civilization they have carried with them to Africa has been preserved, has been kept, despite the fact that they are surrounded by that great mass of uncivilized natives. One has only to see the towns they have established along the sea coast, Robertsport, Monrovia, Buchanan, Sinoe and Harper, and the agricultural settlements along the Rivers St. Paul's and St. John's, to have his respect for the people heightened. These cities are all peaceful and law-abiding. Person and property in them are safe; there is regard for public authority and for wholesome public sentiment. It was with us a source of constant remark that the streets of Monrovia, the capital city, were as safe and as quiet, night and day, as those of any village we could call to mind in our own country.

On Sundays they have a very beautiful custom of raising the Liberian flag, and most of the civilized people attend service in some of the churches, or remain quietly in their homes. Sunday is a day of especial quiet. The adjacent native villages feel the influence of the towns and cities and are also orderly and quiet.

The Liberians are not artisans, and are not at present prepared to cope with the industrial development of their

country, but are adepts, many of them, in the conduct of civil affairs. With the beginning of Liberian independence they have had to deal with the business of conducting their government. No one can read their state papers, for instance, without being struck with the adroitness shown in the handling of their foreign affairs. These state papers are both dignified and intelligent. The tact and ability they have shown in a number of critical instances have called for much praise in high diplomatic circles.

It is to be regretted that they have not had models for guidance in other branches of governmental administration. Although they can boast of a number of very superior men in the field of diplomacy, they cannot so boast in other directions. For instance, there is not in sight, at the present time at least, any man sufficiently equipped to guard them against financial entanglement.

It was in 1871, and again in 1906, that the Liberians under the compulsion of pressure saw, or thought they saw, a way out of financial difficulty by securing foreign loans. In both cases, they found offers ready and at hand from English sources, and in each instance it is to be recorded that the Liberian government was deprived of the just proceeds of what they had bargained for. Disadvantageous to the best interests of their country were the terms of both of these loans. And yet, Liberia, despite the miserable fiasco in both of these instances, is at present, from her customs receipts, manfully meeting the terms imposed upon her by the second agreement; and is also paying something on the first one. A discussion of the terms of these loans may be of interest:

Sir Harry Johnston in his book, *Liberia*, discusses the Loan of 1871. He says:

Towards the close of the sixties there was much discussion in Liberia on the question of public works and the means of opening up the interior to a more profitable and extended commerce, in fact, whilst the constitution and legislature of Liberia were very naturally directed towards keeping this small portion of Africa open to the black man's enterprise, the civilized fringe of this Negro Republic nevertheless stagnated, and the volume of trade was very small, compared with that of the possessions of Great

Britain and France on the West Coast of Africa. Perhaps, also, Liberia, now an independent state of twenty years' existence, thought it was time she should imitate all the other independent states of the world and have a loan and a public debt.

At any rate, Liberia proceeded to acquire both. The Liberian legislature authorized the President of the Republic to negotiate a loan of not less than \$50,000 nor more than \$500,000 in gold and silver coin. The loan, strange to say, was to bear interest at *not less* than 7 per cent and to be redeemable in fifteen years.

The Council of International Bondholders in its summary of this debt states that the interest of the bond was to be

secured by one-fifth ($\frac{1}{5}$) of the entire customs dues of the Republic, which for 1870 produced more than 19,000 pounds sterling, and for the repayment of the principal an excise tax of one dollar per annum was levied and collected from all male citizens. This tax was estimated to produce 30,000 pounds per annum.

All of this seems glitteringly fine, but the "head tax" never amounted to anything and although still on the statute books makes practically no returns.

It so developed that as a result of agreements with the English bankers, Liberia found herself committed to borrow and pay interest at 7 per cent on \$500,000 and to apply only \$100,000 of this amount to any purpose that might be called useful—viz.: for the purpose of buying and selling all the checks, script, and government paper of whatever denomination which might be in existence; of the remaining \$400,000, \$100,000 were to be used for a crudely devised currency system, and the balance was to be deposited in some banking institution to be drawn upon "only in case of emergency" by the legislature. In other words, they were to pay interest on \$400,000 of unproductive money at the same rate as for the productive, or useful sum.

It further developed that an agreement was entered into by the English expert representing Liberia, and his two Liberian associates, who had no financial sense, as we would understand it, whereby £100,000 in bonds were issued against a cash payment of £70,000, a clear steal, I suspect I might just as well call it, of £30,000 or \$150,000. The

bankers also proceeded to collect the interest charge for three years in *advance*. These bankers were a benevolent set of gentlemen! The pitiable story of how Liberia was further mulcted by chicane of one kind and another need not be detailed here. Sir Harry Johnston thinks that a generous estimate of £27,000 in money represents about what finally reached Liberia out of this supposed loan of £100,000.

But ahead of Liberia were other financial breakers. Sir Harry Johnston, to whom I have referred, with the prestige of his splendid record as Governor-General of British East Africa, visited Liberia in 1904. He became most enthusiastic over Liberia's possibilities. He dangled before the delighted vision of the President and the Legislature scheme upon scheme for the development of their country with the result that Liberia, undeterred by its former experience, was ready to embark upon another loan scheme, subject to agreements they could hardly have understood.

Assuming control of, and amalgamating a number of rubber, mining and other corporations which had been granted concessions of one kind and another by the Liberian legislature, under the name and title of the "Liberian Development Company, Chartered and Limited," Sir Harry Johnston announced himself as being ready to redeem Liberia from the engulfing debt in which it was wallowing, and at the same time quite prepared to start the republic on the highway of national progress. He completely overcame the prejudice among Liberians,—a tenet of Liberia's policy, against foreigners operating in their country. He frankly told them, and the Liberians agreed with him, as I do myself, that there could be go great hope for the development of Liberia at the hands of the Liberians themselves. He convinced the officials that friendly Englishmen working in harmony with them could make the Liberian wilderness to blossom like a rose. He assured them that his was one of those splendid financial enterprises that would command unlimited resources in England for purposes of governmental regeneration. He proceeded to show them how, if the credit of the Liberian Government and that of the Liberian Develop-

ment Company were united, they would be able to relieve all the embarrassments of the former and have enough left for projected schemes of development. It was a new destiny upon which Liberia was to embark. And what was the result?

I am estopped from discussing in detail the plans and purposes of the agreements finally drawn up, but I am not estopped from quoting directly from the messages of the President of Liberia to the legislature, and from other official documents which have been published, and which reflect such plans and purposes. In short, the loan was for avowed public, quasi-public and private purposes.

The Company, by the terms of the agreement, was to turn over to the Government of Liberia the sum of £5,000 for its immediate needs, and a further sum of £25,000 for the redemption of outstanding Treasury notes. This was the cash equivalent the Government was to receive for its part in guaranteeing the loan.

Liberia has practically no highways throughout the republic, and so it was quite properly proposed and agreed that some part of the proceeds should be set aside for the purpose of road building. The Liberians, however, were not keen enough to have stated in the agreement *the amount that should be expended, and the plan of audit*.

Another sum was to be set aside for paying off some of the existing debenture bonds of the Liberian Development Company, and take care of some of its current liabilities, and finally, if there should be a remainder, it was to be used for certain schemes of the company, among others a Bank Scheme.

The Government agreed to pay interest upon £100,000 at the rate of 6 per cent per annum, and of course to pay the principal. It was further provided that all customs should be collected under European supervision.

Sir Harry Johnston in his book, quite spiritedly criticises the agreements under the loan of 1871. It is hard to determine, however, how less one-sided they were than those of his own benevolent corporation even if his company had in perfect good faith carried out their part of the bargain. The

suggestion that the customs should be collected by European experts, Englishmen being understood, introduced, of course, the feature of external control into the customs service.

It is well here to say that the introduction of these foreigners did tend to promote an efficiency in administration which the Liberians have not been slow to recognize and applaud, but, as showing how these things are arranged on the "outer edges of civilization," it may be stated, of the so-called experts sent to Liberia under the agreement, the first one's selection was, to say the least, unfortunate. He all but confessed his utter failure after two or three months to understand what he was about, although he had been granted a salary of about \$3,500 a year, much more than he had received in the British service in Sierre Leone. The second one appointed has developed into a somewhat capable official, although his chief claim to being called an expert was, it is said, that he had successfully raised oranges in California. He certainly was no customs expert, and I learn had probably never been inside of a customs house. He receives £500 a year. The present chief inspector of customs is a wholly efficient man, but while doing similar service at Freetown, Sierre Leone, the neighboring country, he received a salary of £300, or \$1500 per year, while the Liberians are called upon to pay him a salary of £1000, or \$5000 a year. This salary, perhaps I should state, is twice that received by the President of the Republic. Efforts to reduce this salary to £700, or \$3500, have recently been made, but with what success I cannot chronicle.

Although the customs service as administered under English supervision has been, and is costly, the Liberians have no just grievance against the present management, for it has brought up the customs receipts and has systematized the whole customs service.

The company's high handed manner of expending the money in hand, however, engendered so much bad blood, that at last President Barclay applied to Sir Harry Johnston, Managing Director of the Liberian Development Company for an accounting. The latter, it is said,

expressed the greatest surprise that such a demand should be made upon him and disclaimed any and all responsibility to the Liberian Government for the way in which the money had been, or was to be, expended. He persistently refused to render any accounts, until he found the position he maintained was so untenable that he could not depend upon his Government for support; he also found that President Barclay was about to sever all relations with his company, maintaining, in the absence of any accounting, that the Government of Liberia would hold itself responsible only for the cash actually received. About \$200,000 of the amount raised on the credit of the government, it is said, had been frittered away on badly managed schemes.

In his message to the legislature on January 16, 1908, President Barclay proceeded to set forth this feature of the controversy. He said:

The reason for discontinuing connection with the Liberian Development Company is to be found in the statement made to me while in London by Sir Harry Johnston the Managing Director. Inviting me to his country residence he there laid before me a verbal statement of the affairs of the Liberian Development Company. He said the Company had no money. That it might be bankrupt any time. He felt the Government of Liberia should manage its own affairs. He saw no hope for the Company unless the Government took it over. He in a few days laid before me a plan providing that the Government buy out the Development Company for 100,000 pounds; until it could pay that sum it would pay interest at two per cent. This proposal was made to me in the office of Messrs. Erlanger, Bankers, before I went to Paris. On my return from Paris I refused to be a party to the scheme and rejected it altogether. I did not see why the Government should be saddled with another 100,000 pounds under the circumstances.

The President in his message, further said:

Pursuing my investigations further, I found that every expense of the Company was being paid out of the 100,000 pounds borrowed on behalf of the Republic, rents, directors' fees, officers' salaries, traveling expenses, and also that the company was sending out prospectors and paying them out of this money.

In dismissing this loan of 1906, may I say that no one now contends that the Liberian Development Company has, or has had, any money aside from that it raised on the

Government's credit; to-day it is practically bankrupt. The relations between the Government and the Company have been severed, and under the agreements of 1908 with Messrs. Erlanger, London, the Liberian Government is responsible for the whole loan.

My purpose in referring at such length to these loan experiences is to show that the Liberians have not produced, as I have stated, a man, or men, capable of keeping them out of such financial entanglements. They have had to pay dearly for their ruinous bargains.

I must not blink the defects of administration to be found, and I have not, but they can in some measure be accounted for, as I have stated, because of the poverty of men and money. Here is a population of 50,000, about that of such cities as, based on the census of 1900, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Ft. Wayne, Indiana; Elizabeth, New Jersey, and Portland, Maine, assuming all of the responsibilities of an independent nation. First of all, well trained men are not easily to be found, for they simply have had no opportunity to be trained, and what they receive in return for their service, however efficient or inefficient it be, is lamentably small. We speak of "sensation-mongers" in this country. Liberia has not escaped them. There also they flourish, and it is probably to them that we are indebted for oft-repeated charges of corruption among public officials and of their willingness to supplement their meagre salaries with bribe money. Of this I can only say that such charges are always more easily made than proven. The loudest protestations of this character have come from those, who, having been checkmated in their efforts to further exploit the Liberians, now turn upon them, and seek to rend them. At any rate no basis could be found for these exaggerated stories of official perfidy and corruption by men as open-minded and quite as disinterested as those who now seek to cultivate a wholly different opinion. Corruption and inefficiency are not synonymous terms.

As a matter of straight fact the internal affairs of Liberia represent the dominance of orderly, constitutional government, and this has been true from the beginning of Liberia's

independence. Even the one president they got rid of was deposed by the constitutional method of impeachment. Their election periods breed a certain measure of public excitement, but, in this country at least, probably no censure will rest against them because of that. Sixty years of constitutional government without even one lapse is not a discreditable record. Liberia now, however, finds itself face to face with duties it can no longer shirk. While the Liberians have done well in governing themselves, they cannot, without outside aid, I fear, cope with the tasks now imposed upon them.

Briefly stated, these larger and more complicated tasks grow out of relations with the powerful nations, with unlimited resources, that hedge them about on all sides. These relations, of course, involve boundary disputes and all of the necessary and consequent problems of international contact. They find themselves in conflict in their disputes with the flower of European diplomacy and while not wholly overborne in diplomatic jugglery, are nevertheless powerless to protest against the weight of brute force.

The question of reclaiming the great hinterland, and developing the splendid resources of the Republic contained therein must not longer be deferred. The world nowadays does not recognize "squatter sovereignty." Either Liberia must develop her own resources, or must see others acquire her lands and do it.

And then, the question of a rational solution of the native problem, the civilizing, the Christianizing, the assimilation of that great mass of uncivilized natives must soon be met in the spirit of the broadest sympathy and with a program at least logical and hopefully promising.

If there be those who insist that the relations of the civilized Liberians and the natives is the immediate and vital point of the future, I may, quite respectfully I hope, reply that it is not less the vital point in the continued existence of European sovereignty over other parts of Africa. Certainly there is no more native unrest, I should say, under Liberian domination than under European domination which has followed the partition of Africa by the Powers of Europe.

I do not believe that any one contends that Europeans have solved the difficulties in the Belgian Congo, in the French Congo, in the Portuguese colonies, in German Southwest Africa, in South Africa, and in Egypt. I should say that Liberia should seek to attain at least as much success in dealing with the natives as the European governments have with the natives in their colonies. There is a native problem in Liberia it is true, but it is just now rather secondary than primary, more remote than immediate.

The native population of Liberia is made up principally of Mandingoes, Krus, Grebboes, Gorahs, Pesseys, Vais, etc.

This multitude of native peoples has no common language. Each tribe and tribal group has its own dialect. Of these tribes, with dialects peculiar to themselves, only one, the Vais, have a written language. In fact, one of the few examples in the world of the invention of a written language was by Duala Bukere, a member of the Vai tribe, who made this invention something like seventy-five years ago. Although the languages of tribes belonging to the same family have philological relations, it appears that the diversity of the dialect is even greater than that of tribal differentiations. As for example, different villages of the Pesseys have such diverse dialects that they cannot communicate with each other except through interpreters. Men, however, with a knowledge of more than one dialect are not rare and they are much sought after as interpreters. Such men wield a great deal of influence in the affairs of their villages.

The most important characteristic of the native population from the standpoint of the government of civilized Liberia is disunion. Because the native population is split up into so many different languages and ruled by hosts of petty chiefs, they have never been able to offer effective resistance to Liberia's authority. There are no signs that this diverse people have any feeling of solidarity or that their differences will ever be sunk in a common cause.

As to reclaiming the great interior section, that will require a considerable sum of money, enterprise, and well-directed industry. It is the general consensus of opinion among those capable of judging that the hinterland holds untouched

riches. With effective, sympathetic aid and direction there is no reason why the Liberians should not be able to develop these resources and use them for the best interests of all the people.

In agricultural and in educational directions, they need just now both guidance and money help. To speak specifically: although, like all tropical countries, Liberia is an agricultural country, its agriculture is of the most primitive type. I am not disposed to hold them too rigorously to account for this, however, for it is only during the past ten or twelve years that advanced agriculture has made its appearance in any part of Africa, and only in recent years that even we in America have begun to show the eager enthusiasm now to be found almost everywhere for the latest and best methods of agricultural production. The staple crop of Liberia is coffee, but the industry is not now, as formerly, a flourishing one. No longer able to meet the sharp competition of those who market their product in better fashion than he, the Liberian has lapsed into a state of discouragement, and is content to raise, in his crude way, with the aid of nature, a most meager and unproductive crop. Only the smallest portion of the area of the country has felt the touch of the hoe or plow. Lack of roads, lack of highways, means of transportation, etc., are responsible in some measure for not opening up the undoubtedly productive lands of the country. Palm oil, palm kernels, piassava fiber, and rubber are treasure stores from the forests, but transporting the products of a country to market on the backs and heads of natives is costly and unprofitable.

About all of the tropical grains, fruits and vegetables which are grown on the west coast of Africa, such as sorghum, maize, cotton, cocoa, guinea corn, millet, rice, plantains, bananas, oranges, mangoes, bread nuts, yams, ground nuts, okra, chili pepper and sweet potatoes flourish in Liberia. Cotton has been grown with some success in the interior. The successful experiments in cotton growing which are being undertaken in different parts of Africa, notably in the Sudan and in the German colony of Togo, where a party of Tuskegee graduates a few years ago began work under the

auspices of the Kolonial Komitee of Berlin, indicate what it is possible to do along this line in Liberia. There is every reason to believe that with proper experimentation cotton growing could be made a leading and a very profitable industry and take the place of the languishing coffee industry.

Liberia recognizes that her agricultural resources should be developed and has made some feeble efforts in this direction. She has a Commissioner of Agriculture at a salary of \$500.00 a year, but he has been able to do little more than issue a few pamphlets and distribute a few seeds. A monthly agricultural paper, *The African Agricultural World*, is published at Monrovia. This paper, however, does not contain very much practical matter. There are a number of Agricultural Societies or Farmers' Alliances, but these societies do not appear to devote much of their time to real practical problems. What is needed are good demonstration farms and travelling demonstration agents who would undoubtedly help the people very much. Two or three good demonstration farms are especially desirable. The example of the success of these farms and the teaching of these agents, would far outweigh the precept of any amount of theoretical teaching outlined in pamphlets. The stimulus of a better understanding of the agricultural possibilities of the country would, I believe, change all of this.

A fairly well-ordered public school system has been devised. A General Superintendent of Education is at the head of affairs. He has supervision of the schools of the state. In each county a Commissioner of Education is appointed, and it is to these the people look for effective supervision of the schools. Very little instruction above the most elementary branches is given in the public schools. To read the school regulations of Liberia, one would think the system ideal, but when the real facts are known they reveal a condition of affairs that challenges pity more than blame.

About \$20,000 a year are appropriated by the Liberian Legislature for the public schools. The Liberian Treasury, however, is not usually overflowing, and oftentimes, although money has been properly authorized, it is not in the Treasury,

and consequently is not available for school purposes. Usually about \$15,000 to \$17,000 are used for school purposes a year, and there is not, so far as we could find, a single public-schoolhouse in the Republic. There are practically no blackboards, never enough books, and of course only the rudiments of elementary instruction can be given. As a rule, an average of about 1300 Liberian and about 1000 native children attend the public schools, all of which are conducted in churches. Well-conducted and adequate schools, with efficient management, cannot be secured without money, and Liberia, at present, has none to give.

An attempt at college education is afforded by Liberia College, to which the Government contributes, as do also the Colonization societies of Boston and New York. The course of study is modeled after that of the smaller colleges of the United States of forty or fifty years ago, and less than 20 pupils receive instruction in the college courses. It is worthy of note, however, that many of the most prominent and influential men of the Republic received their education in Liberia College.

As a matter of fact, the effective educational work of the Republic is not that being done in the state schools, or in Liberia College, but in the schools established and conducted by philanthropic agencies of the United States, notably and chiefly the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church. There are 87 of these schools, including those of the Lutheran and Baptist Churches. The Methodists have a college at Monrovia, the "College of West Africa," and the Episcopalians near Cape Palmas a "Collegiate and Divinity School."

The Government of Liberia must look to others for the means to educate the children of the state. The need of a normal school is urgent. Well trained teachers are a necessity, but most of all, Liberia needs a well equipped industrial training school that would train men and women in agriculture and in those industries closely related to the immediate and pressing industrial needs of the country. Educational conditions are backward, but the explanation is partly to be found in the inadequacy of the national finances.

The Republic is simply unable to do more than it is doing for public education.

As to the education of the native: That is a question and a problem yet to be worked out, not in Liberia alone, however, but elsewhere in Africa, as well. Some few schools for the natives in Liberia have been started, but the problems to be met are many. A system of education especially adapted to the native must in time be devised and Liberia will continue for many years to need the benevolence which now finds its way across the Atlantic.

The other complicated tasks before Liberia, briefly, are: those that grow out of the boundary disputes with France and Great Britain, and those that have to do with the organization of the internal finances of the Republic. Both of these more powerful countries have in times past divested Liberia of valuable territory, and the work goes merrily on. France in 1892 absorbed 60 miles of Liberian coast and extensive territories in the interior. By the treaty of 1907, Liberia will probably lose to France another territory estimated at 2000 square miles. Liberia now plaintively pleads that the boundaries be definitely and conclusively fixed, in order that it may not be further despoiled. As to Great Britain, that nation negotiated a treaty in 1885 with the Liberians, whereby Liberia lost a considerable amount of coast territory, and at this time is earnestly trying to hold the northwest Liberian territory known as Kanre Lahun, occupied under plausible pretext by garrisons from the Sierre Leone regiments.

If Great Britain continue to hold this territory, if France and Great Britain continue to absorb her territory, as in the past, Liberia will find herself confined alone to a narrow coast line, and the territorial integrity of the Republic menaced to the vanishing point.

Secretary Knox in his report to President Taft concerning affairs in Liberia, states that "there are many precedents for the delegation by a sovereign state of its international representation to the diplomatic machinery of another state." Liberia in her present extremity is anxious to have the United States appear as attorney, or next friend, in preventing further territorial aggressions.

It was the unanimous opinion of the Commission of the United States of America to Liberia "that considerations of national honor and duty urge that the United States help these people whose commonwealth was founded by the people of the United States with the aid and assistance of its Government," and to this end presented six recommendations which are designed to constitute effective measures of relief. These recommendations are:

1. THAT THE UNITED STATES EXTEND ITS AID TO LIBERIA IN THE PROMPT SETTLEMENT OF PENDING BOUNDARY DISPUTES

The Government of Liberia has, through its envoys to the United States, requested that our Government enter into a treaty which shall guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic. By so doing the United States would be forced to assume a protectorate over Liberia which that Government has already been advised is out of the question. None the less it is perfectly clear that in the present situation the unsettled boundaries of the country are an obstacle to its internal development. A prompt settlement of these disputes on a definite basis, which, if possible, should be more considerate of the legitimate claims of Liberia than have been such adjustments in times past, would remove one of the greatest hinderances to progress in Liberia.

2. THAT THE UNITED STATES ENABLE LIBERIA TO REFUND ITS DEBT BY ASSUMING AS A GUARANTEE FOR THE PAYMENT OF OBLIGATIONS UNDER SUCH ARRANGEMENT THE CONTROL AND COLLECTION OF THE LIBERIAN CUSTOMS

The debt of Liberia is partly foreign and partly domestic. A portion of the former is now guaranteed by the control of the customs under British officials. It is proposed that the entire debt of Liberia, both foreign and domestic should be reorganized, that the obligations of Liberia should be clear, explicit, and uniform; and that in order to effect this a customs receivership analogous to that now existing in Santo Domingo should be established. Plans are now maturing for carrying out this suggestion.

3. THAT THE UNITED STATES LEND ITS ASSISTANCE TO THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE REFORM OF ITS INTERNAL FINANCES

If the United States assume control of the collection of customs in Liberia, it should appoint as customs receiver a person capable of exercising the functions of financial adviser to the Liberian Government, and the duties of such an adviser should be fixed by agreement with the Government of Liberia.

4. THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD LEND ITS AID TO LIBERIA
IN ORGANIZING AND DRILLING ADEQUATE CONSTABULARY OR
FRONTIER POLICE FORCE

The proposal is that not less than three officers from the American Army should be sent to Liberia to complete the work begun by British officers, and train up a body of Liberians capable of eventually taking over the command of the force.

The experience of Porto Rico, where an effective police battalion was under command of former non-commissioned officers of the army, proves that such a proposition is practical and not visionary. What is wanted among these men is drill and military discipline. They act in small squads and not as a mass.

5. THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN
A RESEARCH STATION IN LIBERIA

The object of such station should be the scientific research of the natural phenomena of the country, the development and preservation of its sources of wealth, the effect of climate on health, and the causes, treatment, and cure of tropical diseases. In this the Commission believes that the underlying purpose of the recent request of the Liberian Government to send to that country an expert from the Department of Agriculture could best be carried out. The problem before the Liberians is a large one. Their country is little known either to the world or to themselves. A knowledge of its natural phenomena would be the most effective service which could be rendered to it in aid of its internal development. It would bring to the attention of the people the importance in agriculture which would stimulate present production and would undoubtedly discover new forms of agriculture to which the country is well adapted. It would, moreover, by its researches in the field of hygiene and sanitation, enable them better to resist the ravages of the climate and by improving the general health of the community, add to its wealth. It would by its research do much to open up the great hinterland and would point the way to productive enterprise in the means of communication. No other service which could be rendered the Liberians at the present time would be more fundamental and give greater assurance of future prosperity to the country.

The United States has already in its brief career in the Tropics made researches and discoveries which have enriched the world's knowledge of tropical conditions. It is to be anticipated that were a well-organized station established in Liberia, there would be further fruits of research which would redound to the credit of the United States. It would afford to the American student an opportunity for the study of the natural products of the continent of Africa in one of its least explored and probably richest parts.

6. THAT THE UNITED STATES REOPEN THE QUESTION OF ESTABLISHING A NAVAL COALING STATION IN LIBERIA

Such a naval station would involve rather expensive harbor works and estimates of the cost of such works have been prepared by the engineer officers of the navy. With the growing importance of the navy of the United States and with the increasing share of the country in world movements, it would appear to the members of the Commission that this question might well receive further consideration and study. The reports submitted to the Navy Department are not altogether unfavorable to the project and some representatives of that department are most strongly inclined toward it.

I have spoken mainly in defense of the Liberians, but not without the keenest appreciation of the faults of the past and the tasks of the future. Hope, faith, confidence, racial ties,—all, lead me most earnestly to hope that there may be preserved this one spot on the African continent where, unhampered, the black man may be permitted to work out his destiny in fear and trembling.

Is Liberia worth saving? I believe that it is. Her people are not revolutionary in character, as are, for instance, those belligerent friends to the South of us. The Liberian republic is not bankrupt despite alarmist reports to the contrary. The Liberians have advanced and not retrograded in civilization. They have helped to uplift the natives—to no considerable degree it is true, but nevertheless to an appreciable degree. Finally, they have given the lie to the statement that “Negroes cannot conduct an orderly form of government,” guaranteeing to its people life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.